



Reshoring Components Protects Quality

[*IndustryWeek*](#)

Oorja Fuel Cells brought production back when errors turned up in the field.

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Schedule number one for a start-up business -- provide a quality product. This is especially important when the product involves a new technology. There is no reputation to fall back on should errors occur.

Sanjiv Malhotra, CEO of [Oorja Fuel Cells](#) knows this first hand. "The lure of overseas production was attractive, especially from a cost perspective. So we started with a few components but we found out that in the field the parts were failing. It was a wakeup call for us and we brought those parts back to the U.S. for production."

So how did he recover the increase cost of U.S. production? "We focused on design and have been able to reduce costs by 55-60%," Malhotra said.

Malhortra started the company eight years ago. Based in Fremont, Calif. the company designs, develops and manufacturers liquid methanol based fuel cells. The fuel cells provide battery charging for forklifts, pallet loaders, automated guided vehicles and other material handling equipment.

One company that is taking advantage of the technology is [Nissan Motor Co. \(IW 100/26\)](#). "We will save near \$225,000 per year and avoid spending \$300,000 for battery replacement," explained Sorgi, senior manager of material handling, Nissan, Smyrna, Tenn. "We can probably run anywhere from 14 to 16 hours on one tank of methanol. It takes 60 seconds to refill versus battery change-out that takes 15 minutes."

The battery continuously charges on-board battery in the material handling vehicle. This ensures the battery never reaches a state of deep discharge. Battery charge and power are maintained at high levels and the battery is not subject to heat damage caused during recharging. Therefore, battery life is increased and battery maintenance needs are reduced.

Last year the company shipped more than 500 units.

Mahotra believes that the type of technology his company is using is one that can eventually create a number of jobs in the U.S.

“The U.S. should take the lead with this technology,” said Mahotra. It’s a perfect example of creating, producing and even one day exporting technology as there is a huge market. It keeps jobs in the U.S.”

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